



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Lafayette man pleads guilty to unauthorized discharge of pollutants

BATON ROUGE – A Lafayette man pled guilty yesterday to the unauthorized discharge of a pollutant into a publicly owned treatment works; and, in doing so, he knew or should have known that such a discharge would cause personal injury or property damage.

Jason Bruno, 38, pled guilty to negligently discharging tetrachloroethylene, a hazardous substance, into a publicly owned treatment works during the period December 2007 through May 2009. Bruno, former owner and manager of One Low Price Cleaners in Lafayette, separated wastewater from spent tetrachloroethylene solvent or solids from dry cleaning machines, and subsequently poured the wastewater into the drain or toilet. Wastewater from tetrachloroethylene is a hazardous waste. One Low Price Cleaners had been using a hazardous waste disposal company to dispose of the wastewater, however, they chose to bypass this step in order to avoid paying the company's pickup and disposal fees.

"It is unfortunate that a few business owners choose to conduct operations that violate the law at the expense of human health and the environment," said Ryan Brignac, Supervisor of DEQ's Criminal Investigative Division. "The willful discharge of a hazardous material into a public sewer system is a serious offense that will be met with serious consequences and prosecution to the fullest extent of the law. DEQ continues to work with the public as well as local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in order to investigate and bring such violators to justice."

"There are honest accidents and then there are crimes," said Ivan Vikin, Special Agent in Charge of EPA's Criminal Enforcement Division in Louisiana. "Tetrachloroethylene, often known as 'perc,' is a toxic chemical that can cause headaches, nausea and unconsciousness. Exposure to very high concentrations can result in death. The defendant negligently dumped perc into the city sewer system for up to two years. Yesterday's guilty plea shows that anyone who deliberately puts public health and the environment at risk will be prosecuted."

The case was investigated by the Louisiana Environmental Crimes Task Force, which is comprised of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Criminal Investigation Division and the Louisiana State Police.

The Honorable Judge Richard T. Haik, of the U.S. District Court, Western District of Louisiana, Lafayette Division, presided.

A sentencing date has not been set.

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